

May 26, 1990

EMBARGO: 2 p.m.

AQ president addresses ninth annual convention

Quebec's differences "...can and must continue to be expressed within a united Canada" - Keaton

Alliance Quebec President Robert Keaton called upon English-speaking Quebecers to work for a healthy and prosperous Quebec within a united Canada. Mr. Keaton made his appeal in a speech to some 350 participants at Alliance Quebec's ninth annual conference this weekend at John Abbott College in Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue.

Mr. Keaton told delegates that they will play a role in resolving the present constitutional impasse. "What happens after June 23rd? English-speaking Quebecers will help answer that question."

"It may not be easy. It has not been easy so far. But, this country is worth saving. In that regard, each one of us will speak for Alliance Quebec. Each one of us will speak for our community. I have every confidence that we will do so with passion and intelligence".

In his address, Mr. Keaton underlined the important role the Alliance has played in expressing the concerns, and the potential of English-speaking Quebec. He identified some of the accomplishments achieved by the Alliance through its 15 chapters and 5 affiliated associations over the past year.

- Last fall, the Alliance and the community sent an unmistakable message in the provincial election, demanding that the concerns of English-speaking Quebecers be addressed. "We showed that politicians who ignore (those concerns) only do so at their peril," Mr. Keaton noted.
- Last October, the Alliance conducted a first-ever community conference on French second-language instruction. Educators and community leaders from across the province came together to discuss the problems and strategies surrounding our efforts to master the language of the majority.

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- Last winter, the Alliance was instrumental in getting the provincial government to back down from a proposal to institute regional boards for health and social service institutions. The proposal would have stripped away a large measure of the autonomy enjoyed by our hospitals, social service and reception centres.
- This spring, the Alliance has worked hard to convince the federal Treasury Board to implement regulations to enforce Canada's *Official Languages Act*. In recent meetings with the Treasury Board president, Alliance Quebec was assured that the regulations will be forthcoming.

Mr. Keaton also pointed to many local Alliance Quebec initiatives like the Community Service Directories published by AQ chapters in Montreal-East Island and the Lower and Upper Laurentians; Abitibi-East's new multicultural centre committee co-ordinated by the AQ chapter, which is bringing together business, government and ethnic community leaders; St-Maurice Valley's English/French guide to medical terminology; Montreal Region's new membership outreach strategy; the South Shore's successful variety gala; and a Laval/North Shore's public meeting on the new family patrimony bill.

Mr. Keaton congratulated members for their hard work on behalf of the Alliance, and urged them to renew their commitment over the coming year. "I cannot overemphasize the importance of strengthening our volunteer network," he said. "Alliance Quebec cannot argue before governments -- for the repeal of the notwithstanding clause, for the right to ensure access to jobs and services for our young people -- if we do not do so with a solid mandate from a healthy membership. And we cannot get that solid mandate if we are not intelligent, tough and tireless in our arguments before government. Together, let us renew our commitment to both of these missions".

For further information, please contact David Birnbaum, director of Communications, at (514) 452-7420 or 457-7421.

**NOTES FROM AN ADDRESS DELIVERED
BY
ROBERT KEATON, PRESIDENT
TO THE NINTH ANNUAL CONVENTION
OF ALLIANCE QUEBEC**

MAY 26, 1990

EMBARGO 2 P.M.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, fellow members and friends of Alliance Quebec. I feel honored to be addressing the Alliance's ninth annual Convention, as president of this very solid, intelligent and essential voice of our English-speaking community.

I am honored to follow to this podium four individuals -- Eric Maldoff, Michael Goldbloom, Royal Orr and Peter Blaikie -- who have spoken for this organization with eloquence, wisdom, toughness and compassion. Over the years, their dedication has been mirrored by our members and our staff across the province. I witnessed that dedication as a volunteer during the founding years of the Alliance, and I've seen it up close as president over the past seven months. As we head into our ninth year, I feel most honored to serve as your spokesman.

As we complete this program year, the Alliance -- indeed the country -- finds itself in the midst of most challenging times. I believe the Alliance has been responding admirably to those challenges. I trust that our country will do the same. Alliance Quebec and the community it serves have played an active and effective role in the debate over Canada's future. That we have done so is a confirmation of our organization's renewed health and stability. At the beginning of the program year we complete today, the Alliance was faced with the daunting task of rebuilding and consolidating an organization that had been through perhaps the most difficult period in its history. With a show of discipline and stamina, the staff and senior volunteers began undertaking that task with the staging of a remarkable convention last May.

The rebuilding job started then. Together, I think we have gone a long way towards completing it over the past year. Our staff is finally housed in a permanent home, we have Marie-Andrée Bastien on board as our Executive Director and we have an active core of volunteers in 15 chapters and 5 associations across Quebec working to reinforce the grassroots that have always guided this organization.

So, I hope you will share with me my optimism ... because I have no doubt that it is well-founded. Providing a responsible and representative voice for our community remains the most essential mandate that Alliance Quebec must fill. I believe we have done so this year, in Quebec and on the national front.

Here in Quebec, the Alliance has spoken out strongly for our community in rejecting any suggestion that would restrict the rights of minorities. I do not have to remind you that our community has worked hard to understand and adapt to a changing Quebec. I think we have done so, with honesty and good will. But, we have our bottom line, it's always been there, and always will be. It was crossed with Bill 178, and the prohibition of English on exterior signs. Bill 178 remains an odious law, a repressive law and an unfair law. We will unrelentlessly pursue our opposition to it. Our bottom line also gets crossed when the president of the CEQ, Quebec's largest teachers' union, suggests that the government shut off bursaries to those looking to study in a second official language; it gets crossed when the CÉCM, Quebec's largest school board, proposes to punish students for speaking to each other in a language other than French; and it gets crossed when the Premier contemplates a double standard of minority rights in Canada -- one for Francophones outside Quebec, and one for our own community. The Alliance will never accept that kind of expediency on fundamental issues of principle.

Our strong interventions on behalf of minority-language rights have struck a resonant chord with Canadians across the country. Our elected leaders are learning that they must respond to those appeals. Alliance Quebec has persevered in this effort by building a common front for minority-language rights with Francophone groups across the country. I recognize that there are some who have questioned the value of the Alliance's continued commitment to this initiative. Some have suggested that we should concentrate on problems closer to home.

Well, the fight for minority-language education rights in Alberta is our problem, and the fight for access to government services in French in Manitoba is our problem. When the Francophone constituents in more than 50 Ontario municipalities are told by their city council that they cannot share an equal and valued place in their own community, we must share their anger and their pain. We must share their resolve to fight for change.

Each of these questions demands that, as Canadians, we decide how we are going to live together in this country. Minorities across Canada are not looking to be "well-treated", as some provincial politicians have suggested. English-speaking

Quebecers, like Francophones outside of this province, reject the notion of "treatment" for minorities. We are Canadians. There must be one standard for all of us -- in the Soo, in the Saguenay, in Quebec City and Ottawa. If Alliance Quebec is to make that argument strongly, we must make it across this country, in English and in French, and as often as possible. Each of these questions hits very close to home indeed. We have a duty to answer them.

Alliance Quebec has been vigilant but it must also be visionary. Since its creation in 1982, the Alliance has made tremendous strides in building a new consensus in Quebec and in Canada. Of course, there continue to be frustrations and setbacks. But, we have shown the perseverance and maturity to weather the highs and lows. Alliance has best exhibited that perseverance and maturity in its contributions to the very difficult debate over the Meech Lake Accord. That debate is becoming increasingly difficult with each passing day. But, we have served our community well throughout this most stressful period of constitutional discussion. We will continue to do so -- up until June 23 and long after that. Of course, there have been problems. Of course, there have been conflicts. Is there any other way for a community to contribute seriously and constructively to so important a dialogue? I don't believe so.

Let us examine where that dialogue has taken us:

In May 1987 -- before Meech Lake had even been introduced -- the Alliance appeared before a National Assembly Committee studying constitutional reform. The Alliance applauded the eleven First Ministers for their efforts to promote national reconciliation, acknowledged the validity of Quebec's five conditions, and then proceeded to enumerate three essential concerns.

Those concerns were : 1) that Parliament, as well as each of the provincial legislatures, be required to promote as well as preserve Canada's linguistic duality; 2) that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms be the supreme law of the land; and 3) that the eleven First Ministers commit themselves to a process aimed at removing the notwithstanding clause.

Since May '87, the Alliance has taken every opportunity to reiterate those concerns, and to restate our vision of a strong Canada, proud of and committed to its minority-language communities and to its Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We made those arguments before the House of Commons in August '87; we made them before the Senate in December '87, we made them to the Ontario Legislature in February '88; in New Brunswick in February '89. I outlined them again in a letter to the Prime Minister last November.

And, last month, the Alliance again put forth those concerns before the House of Commons Committee studying the New Brunswick proposals. We stressed then -- as the Alliance has since 1987 -- that a formula can be found that will allow all Canadians to celebrate the signature of Quebec on a successfully amended Canadian Constitution. The report of the Charest Committee on May 17th emphasized that same conviction. Furthermore, the committee reflected upon many of the issues and ideas that the Alliance has worked so hard to formulate. The committee reported, for example, that the presentations of minority-language groups including ours persuaded it to recommend adding a federal obligation to promote linguistic duality to any companion resolution.

The report may still prove to be the foundation of an agreement. In any event, it will remain a vindication of our hard work, and a guarantee that the concerns of minorities will never be sacrificed with the signing of an imperfect constitutional deal.

While Meech Lake dominated the constitutional landscape over the past year, an important step forward was reached in the legal interpretation of our rights and freedoms under the Canadian Charter. The Alliance joined all Canadians in welcoming a Supreme Court decision in March which now offers great promise to minority-language communities across the country. In rendering its decision in the *Mahé* case, the Court ruled that Section 23 of the Charter affords English-speaking Quebecers and French-speaking citizens in other provinces substantial rights over the control and management of their own schools. I do not have to tell you that the fate of our schools and the fate of our English-speaking communities across the province are inextricably linked. Those schools, under our present confessional system of education, are offered only limited protection. Bill 107, designed to create

a new system of linguistic boards, has always been viewed by the Alliance as but a first step in the right direction. We have always insisted, however, that those new structures must be constitutionally protected. This Supreme Court decision could be a very crucial second step on the way to attaining that protection.

This court decision is significant in another way: Alliance Quebec intervened prominently in this case. In our factum, Professor Stephen Scott pleaded for a broad interpretation of Section 23 rights, and, evidently, the judges heeded many of his arguments. In this area of essential concern to our community -- education -- the Alliance once again played a central role in putting forward a reasoned and thoughtful position in the name of English-speaking Quebecers. Once again, the Alliance provided the forum for the development of a position promoting the best interests of English-speaking Quebecers and minorities across the country.

There have been frustrations, and there have been setbacks. But there have also been improvements and important steps forward. The reality of a broadly-based community coalition like ours -- especially one that operates in the political arena -- is that change only comes slowly and steadily. There are no neat answers, no perfect endings ...only consistent hard work resulting in honest progress. That does bring its results that we must acknowledge and celebrate.

Allow me to offer just a few cases in point:

- □ Last fall, the Alliance and the community sent a strong and unmistakable message in the provincial election: we insisted that our concerns be addressed, and we showed that politicians who ignore them only do so at their peril. It was an exercise in democracy. While it was very difficult for our community, the election demonstrated that we are still a vital force in this province, and one that will continue to be vigilant in protecting its future.
- Last October, the Alliance was the meeting place for a first-ever community conference on French second-language instruction. Educators and community leaders from across the province came together to discuss the

problems and strategies surrounding our efforts to master the language of the majority.

- This winter, the interventions of the Alliance proved instrumental in getting the provincial government to back down from a proposal to institute regional boards for health and social service institutions. The proposal would have stripped away a large measure of the autonomy enjoyed by our hospitals, social service and reception centres. These institutions uphold the character and history of English-speaking Quebec. Our ability to control and manage them is vital to our future.
- Our efforts to ensure the meaningful implementation of Bill 142 were rewarded with the naming of regional co-ordinators to monitor access to health and social services in English. This program is funded through a federal/provincial entente which might serve as a model for other provinces.
- The Alliance has insisted, it has pushed and pleaded in convincing the federal Treasury Board that it must implement regulations to enforce Canada's Official Languages Act. This act is crucial to Canada's commitment to providing minority-language services in English in Quebec and French elsewhere in the country. Ottawa has so far failed to put teeth into the act, adopted almost two years ago. AQ met with the president of the Treasury Board last week and we reiterated our concerns. We were assured that the regulations will be forthcoming. We will be watching.
- Our community has always demonstrated pride in its self-reliance. Over the past year, Alliance Quebec has worked hard to emulate that quality. Together, we have begun to take responsibility for the financial health of the organization. Last winter, our members responded to our appeal for support with total donations of over \$90,000. Local chapters and associations came through with special events and appeals. We have begun to invest in ourselves in a concrete way that will strengthen the Alliance as it prepares for the 1990s.

- We have worked to open the Alliance to Quebec's ethnic communities. This is so essential to our efforts to reflect the reality of English-speaking Quebec. Through regular contacts at the staff and volunteer level, through the input of organizational member groups, we have fostered an improved exchange with representatives of the various communities. We must pursue those efforts vigorously in the coming years.
- There has finally been some movement in the ongoing effort to ensure that Quebec's 54,000-member civil service includes a realistic proportion of English-speaking Quebecers. At present, we are woefully under-represented in the civil service. But, as many of you heard this morning, a committee of the provincial government will soon be recommending measures to redress this long-standing problem.
- Over the past year, Alliance Quebec's chapters and associations across the province continued to provide leadership, support and encouragement to their communities. Their presidents have provided wise counsel while attending key provincial Board meetings, for the first time. They will continue to do so on key issues in the coming year. Local initiatives have once again made a difference -- initiatives like the Community Service Directories published by our chapters in Montreal-East Island and the Lower and Upper Laurentians; Abitibi-East's new multicultural centre committee, bringing together business, government and ethnic community leaders; St. Maurice Valley's English/French guide to medical terminology; Montreal Region's new membership outreach strategy; the South Shore's tremendously successful gala; and Laval/North Shore's public meeting on the new family patrimony bill.

Projects like these are Alliance Quebec at its best. They speak of our members' commitment to their communities, of the teamwork and camaraderie we can share and build upon. Each of us should take stock of this fine work. Each of us should help bear the responsibility of getting our message out to the wider community. Your president and Executive cannot lean over the fence and talk to your neighbor. You can. We cannot call every talkshow and answer every editorial. You can help. I urge you to do your part.

We must work together to ensure that the upcoming program year yields comparably positive results. We must increase our membership in every corner of the province. We must renew our efforts to recruit the best from our communities to serve on our boards and committees. The spirit of collaboration that our members have always demonstrated must be renewed in the year to come.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of strengthening our volunteer network. There has always been a debate within the Alliance about whether we are first and foremost an organization that lobbies government or one that promotes community development. Frankly, there is no conflict ...because we are both, and we must remain both. Alliance Quebec cannot argue before governments -- for the repeal of the notwithstanding clause, for the right to ensure access to jobs and services for our young people -- if we do not do so with a solid mandate from a healthy membership. And we cannot get that solid mandate if we are not intelligent, tough and tireless in our arguments before government. Together, let us renew our commitment to both of these missions.

The other tasks at hand for the coming year will again touch on the cornerstones of our community and our future in this province. As I mentioned, the Supreme Court decision in the *Mahé* case adds a new dimension to the question of language-based school boards. Alliance Quebec will have to lead the community through a thorough analysis of its implications. We will have to work with the leadership of our educational community to arrive at a unified strategy to entrench our English school network and to guarantee its future for the next century.

Bill 142 has represented a watershed for the Alliance. The importance of guaranteeing access to English-language health and social services is paramount. But, the job is not finished. Our senior citizens and our young people in so many areas of the province are often unable to find the care and counselling they require. AQ chapters and associations, in concert with the provincial office, will step up the pressure to have these crucial gaps in services corrected. Mr. Sirros has brought us important news this morning that will help address these needs. We will collaborate with his Ministry to move forward on them.

In the coming year, we will not shy away from defending the legitimate concerns of the English-speaking community in Quebec. With your help, we will demonstrate that we have a positive role to play in promoting the health and prosperity of Quebec. With your help, we will show that we are constructive partners in that process -- partners who contribute to Quebec, with confidence in our potential and in our resolve to settle for nothing less than a full and respected place beside our Francophone *concitoyens*.

Allow me to conclude with a comment on a more immediate deadline. Of course, none of us can say exactly what awaits us in the months following June 23rd. But I think we have some precedents to guide us. Quebecers of all backgrounds and languages have argued, lived, loved and worked together through all kinds of diversity. I can remember organizing for the "No" Committee in St-Jacques riding during the referendum. I do not know how many doors we knocked on, how many coffee tables we pounded, but there was always a sense of mutual respect, a conviction that we would find a way to transcend our differences. I am convinced that ten years later, we will again find our way.

What happens after June 23rd? English-speaking Quebecers will help answer that question. We are part of Quebec. Quebec is part of our collective heart and soul, as we are part of it. We will do everything we can to help the rest of Canada understand that Quebec is different in all kinds of ways that we should all celebrate. We will do everything we can to show that those differences have always been and must continue to be expressed within a united Canada. We will seek the solutions in our daily lives -- and we will insist that our politicians offer us true leadership in that quest.

It may not be easy. It has not been easy so far. But, this country is worth saving. In that regard, each one of us will speak for Alliance Quebec. Each one of us will speak for our community. I have every confidence that we will do so with passion and with intelligence. We will do so successfully.

Thank you.

AQ must sell itself more: Keaton

alliance quebec



(Brian Sherratt photo)

Alliance president Bob Keaton addresses membership Saturday at the group's 9th convention at John Abbott.

President criticizes local membership

Alliance Quebec must sell itself to Quebecers who seem unaware of the group's efforts to promote bilingualism in the province, was one message to the membership from the group's president Bob Keaton.

Keaton was acclaimed as president of the Alliance last weekend, at the ninth annual convention, held at John Abbott College in Ste. Anne de Bellevue.

Keaton, in an interview after his speech on Saturday, said he is particularly disappointed in the West Island membership's lack of effectiveness in making the Alliance's past actions known.

Nearly two weeks ago, Keaton stood in the mall at the Pointe Claire shopping centre with Harry Schick, the owner of Swiss Vienna Pastry, who is currently battling the province's signs law.

Passersby were asked if they knew Keaton, and how they felt about the Alliance.

Many said Alliance Quebec should organize a demonstration to stand up for Schick, many thought AQ was doing little for English Quebecers.

"I'm disappointed in my own members of the West Island chapter for not being aware of the accomplishments of the society," Keaton said. "If they are aware, they have a responsibility" to tell others.

While Keaton reiterated his position that it is the wrong time for a demonstration, he added that the Alliance "is afraid only a few people would turn out."

"We're thinking about going out there, but we want to make sure the community is behind us," Keaton said.

He appeared to be of two minds as to whether or not there will be fewer English-speaking people to draw support from in the near future.

He said he expects a "hemorrhage" after the June 23 deadline for ratification of the Meech Lake accord, particularly from the West Island. However, he added later that English-Quebecers are at home here and will not leave.

The Alliance's executive is planning a conference of English-speaking community leaders, academics and professionals this fall to view the political scene and make recommendations.

ALSO: See stories, page 6

A poor suggestion?

As a bilingual anglophone Quebecer, I am not impressed with the suggestion of Alliance Quebec's president Robert Keaton that anglophones embrace Quebec culture and speak French "out of sheer respect for French-speaking Quebecers" (*Gazette*, May 28). It is equivalent to suggesting that francophones in Ontario assimilate themselves to ensure that they are welcome.

One should be able to speak one's native language and display symbols of one's culture or heritage openly, without prejudice from other members of society.

There is something extremely wrong when laws are enacted, however democratically, to limit these basic freedoms. The consequence is that anglophones choose to leave Quebec; making a commitment to stay realistically requires an anglophone to oppose the democratic society of a majority.

Alliance Quebec represents the convictions of anglophones as much as the premiers and prime minister represent the views of citizens with regards to Meech Lake.

THOMAS WRIDOLIN
Roxboro

CHRONICLE MAY 23/90.

Alliance Quebec holds convention at John Abbott

The ninth annual Alliance Quebec convention is being held this weekend at John Abbott College in Ste. Anne de Bellevue. For the second year in a row, Pierre-Étienne-Dallard MP and Secretary of State Gerry Weiner is making the opening address on Friday night.

On Saturday morning Quebec Treasury

Board president Daniel Johnson will speak to the membership.

Discussions that morning include "Increasing anglophone representation in the provincial public service: Quebec listens to you."

This workshop, organized by the Consultative Committee on Anglophones Ac-

cess to the Civil Service, is the first in a series of public forums to gather information about government jobs for English-speaking residents.

Chairman of the committee, David Blair, in a press release said similar forums will be held in different regions of Quebec to listen to "the difficulties of

access ... experienced by members of the community, and about their suggestions for improving the situation."

Alliance president Bob Keaton will be acclaimed to a second term, as no other names have been put forth. The convention ends on Sunday.